

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 03702 281312Z

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SS-15 EB-11 L-03 INR-10 RSR-01 RSC-01

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R 281001Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4778

S E C R E T JIDDA 3702

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DEPT PASS CAIRO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP, EG, SA

SUBJECT: WHEAT FOR EGYPT

REF CAIRO 2504

SUMMARY: KAMAL ADHAM REPORTED SADAT HAD MADE STRONG PLEA DURING HIS RECENT VISIT HERE FOR SAUDI INTERVENTION WITH US TO HELP SECURE FAVORABLE RESPONSE EGYPT'S REQUEST FOR WHEAT. ADHAM STRESSED THIS OPPORTUNITY SHOW THAT SAUDI-US FRIENDSHIP COULD PROVIDE TANGIBLE BENEFIT FOR ARABS AND THAT US MIDDLE EAST POLICY WAS ONE OF "EVEN-HANDEDNESS." AMB POINTED OUT THAT EGYPTIAN REQUEST WAS VERY LARGE ONE IN PRESENT FOOD-SHORT WORLD, STATUS OF EGYPTIAN CREDIT UNCERTAIN, AND SADAT'S PRESENT POLITICAL CREDIT IN WASHINGTON NOT TOO GOOD AT PRESENT. ADHAM, CRESTFALLEN, RENEWED HIS VIGOROUS PLEA. COMMENT: CLEARLY POSITIVE US RESPONSE WOULD HAVE MOST FAVORABLE IMPACT HERE. ACTION REQUESTED: IN FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE AMB SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED GIVE ADHAM USG VIEWS IN MATTER. END SUMMARY.

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH KAMAL ADHAM OTHER EVENING HE TOLD ME EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT, DURING BRIEF PRIVATE VISIT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 JIDDA 03702 281312Z

HERE LAST WEEK, URGED STRONG SAUDI SUPPORT WITH THE US

FOR EGYPTIAN WHEAT REQUEST (REFTEL).

2. ADHAM WENT ON AT SOME LENGTH TO EXPLAIN THERE NO DOUBT EGYPTIAN NEED QUITE DIRE. POSITIVE US RESPONSE WOULD GO FAR TOWARDS MAKING CLEAR TO ARABS GENERALLY SINCERITY OF US WISH MAINTAIN NORMAL AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH ARAB GOVTS. IF US COULD COME THROUGH WITH SOME SIGNIFICANT HELP FOR SADAT IN THIS INSTANCE, ADHAM CLAIMED, THEN SAUDIS WOULD HAVE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE PRESENT TO OTHER ARABS OF VALUE US-SAUDI FRIENDSHIP. WARMING TO HIS EXHORTATION, ADHAM DECLARED THAT RENEWED WAR WOULD NOT BRING PEACE, JUST FURTHER DISASTER ON EVERYONE. ARABS IN GENERAL, AND SAUDI ARABIA ESPECIALLY, BADLY NEED OUR HELP. WHEAT RESCUE FOR EGYPT WOULD BE TANGIBLE PROOF OF DIRECTION IN WHICH WE WANTED TO MOVE. US "EVEN-HANDEDNESS" WOULD BE PROVEN.

3. TOLD ADHAM I HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY SIZE OF EGYPTIAN REQUEST AND THREE ASPECTS OF EGYPTIAN SITUATION OCCURRED TO ME:

A. MILLION AND A HALF TONS WAS INDEED LARGE QUANTITY TO LOCATE IN A WORLD WHERE FOOD SHORTAGES ARE CURRENTLY WIDESPREAD AND ACUTE. I HAD NO IDEA WHETHER USG COULD COMMAND SUCH QUANTITY.

B. I WAS UNCERTAIN WHETHER EGYPTIAN CREDIT STILL GOOD FOR CCC TYPE LOANS WHICH HAD BEEN USED TO EXTEND HELP IN PAST.

C. TO BE QUITE FRANK, I WAS NOT SURE OF SADAT'S PRESENT POLITICAL CREDIT IN WASHINGTON. HE HAD IN RECENT MONTHS GIVEN VENT TO SERIES OF STRONG ANTI-US STATEMENTS, KIND OF THING WHICH TENDED TO REDUCE PEOPLE'S WILLINGNESS TURN TO AND FIND EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES TO ASSIST HIM. NEVERTHELESS, SPEAKING PURELY PERSONALLY, I SAID, I COULD SEE SOME VIRTUE IN ADHAM'S ARGUMENTS AND WOULD TRY TO MAKE CERTAIN THEY WERE UNDERSTOOD IN WASHINGTON.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 JIDDA 03702 281312Z

RM ADHAM WAS CLEARLY CRESTFALLEN AT MY SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE RESPONSE AND BECAME MORE EMPHATIC IN URGING FAVORABLE US CONSIDERATION. "WE ARE COUNTING ON YOU", HE SAID. "YOU KNOW US AND YOU KNOW THE AREA. SEE THAT YOUR PEOPLE DON'T MISS THIS CHANCE."

5. COMMENT: THERE WAS NO DOUBTING SINCERITY AND URGENCY OF ADHAM'S PLEA, ALTHOUGH, INTERESTINGLY, HE

MADE NO REFERENCE TO POSSIBLE SAUDI FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

6. SAUDIS, AS WE KNOW, ARE FREQUENTLY EXHORTED BY THEIR NEIGHBORS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT US-SAUDI FRIENDSHIP IS TWO-WAY STREET--WITH BENEFITS FOR ARAB WORLD AS WELL AS FOR US. POSITIVE RESPONSE ON EGYPTIAN WHEAT ISSUE WOULD PROVIDE CLEAR DEMONSTRATION SAUDI ARABIA HAS INDEED SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE WITH US WHICH CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR FOR TANGIBLE ARAB ADVANTAGE.

7. SHOULD FAVORABLE ACTION BE POSSIBLE, THEN I WOULD URGE WE ENDEAVOR ARRANGE FOR SAUDIS OBTAIN MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM SADAT FOR HAVING ARGUED HIS CASE SUCCESSFULLY. KING WOULD, I AM SURE, BE GREATLY GRATIFIED, AND PERHAPS SIGNIFICANTLY MOLLIFIED BY OUR RESPONSE TO THIS REQUEST. THIS COULD BE VERY HELPFUL IN PRESENT PHASE OF OUR RELATIONS.

8. IF WASHINGTON FINDS IT POSSIBLE MEET SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF EGYPTIAN REQUEST, WOULD URGE I BE AUTHORIZED TELL ADHAM WE HAD TAKEN VERY MUCH INTO ACCOUNT SAUDI VIEWS IN THIS CASE. IF DEPT DESIRES ME PURSUE WITH HIM QUESTION OF POSSIBLE SAUDI FINANCING, I WOULD OF COURSE BE HAPPY TO DO SO.

9. IN ANY CASE, BELIEVE I SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED IN FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE GIVE ADHAM AN IDEA OF USG VIEWS.
THACHER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973JIDDA03702
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS THACHER
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730811/aaaaahzp.tel
Line Count: 144
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CAIRO 2504
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10-Dec-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <23-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHEAT FOR EGYPT
TAGS: BEXP, EG, SA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005